

F R E E T H O U G H T S
O N T H E
P R E S E N T S T A T E
O F
P U B L I C A F F A I R S.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

*Periculoso plenum opus aleæ
Tractas, & incedis per ignes
Suppositas cineri doloso.* HOR,

L O N D O N :

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RPJCB

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L E T T E R

T O A

F R I E N D.

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YOU desire me to give you my thoughts freely, on the present state of Public Affairs. But do you consider? I am no politician: Politics lie quite out of my province. Neither have I any acquaintance, at least no intimacy, with any that bear that character. And it is no easy matter to form any judgment, concerning things of so complicated a nature. It is the more difficult, because in order to form our judgment, such a multitude of facts should be known, few of which can be known with tolerable exactness, by any but those who are eye-witnesses of them. And how few of these will relate what they have seen precisely as it was, without adding, omitting or altering any circumstance; either with or without design? And may not a slight addition or alteration, give a quite different colour to the whole?

And as we cannot easily know with any accuracy, the facts on which we are chiefly to form our judgment, so much less can we expect to know the various springs of action, which gave rise to those facts, and on which more than on the bare actions themselves, the characters of the actors depend. It is on this account that an old writer advises us, to *judge nothing before the time; to abstain, as far as possible, from judging peremptorily,*

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either of things or persons, till the time comes, when
the hidden things of darkness, the facts now concealed,
will be brought to light, and the hidden springs of ac-
tion will be discovered, *the thoughts and intents of every*
human heart.

Perhaps you will say, “ Nay, every *Englishman* is a
“ Politician; we suck in politics with our mother’s
“ milk. It is as natural for us to talk politics as to
“ breathe: we can instruct both the King and his Coun-
“ cil. We can in a trice reform the State, point out every
“ blunder of this or that Minister, and tell every step
“ they ought to take, to be Arbiters of all *Europe.*”

I grant, every Cobler, Tinker, Porter and Hackney-
Coachman can do this. But I am not so *deep-learned*:
while they are sure of every thing, I am in a manner sure
of nothing; except of that very little which I see with
my own eyes, or hear with my own ears. However,
since you desire me to tell you what I think, I will do
it with all openness. Only please to remember, I do not
take upon me to *dictate*, either to you or to any one. I
only use the privilege of an *Englishman*, to speak my
naked thoughts: setting down just what appears to me
to be the truth, till I have better information.

At present, indeed, I have not much information,
having read little upon this head, but the public papers.
And you know, these are mostly on one side: in them
little is to be seen on the other side. And that little is
seldom wrote by *masterly* writers. How few of them
have such a pen as JUNIUS?

But supposing we have ever so much information,
how little can one rely on it? on the information given
by either party? For is not one as warm as the other?
And who does not know, how impossible it is for a man
to see things right, when he is angry? Does not passion
blind the eyes of the understanding, as smoke does the
bodily eyes? And how little of the truth can we learn
from those, who see nothing but through a cloud?

This advantage then I have over both parties, the be-
ing angry at neither. So that if I have a little under-
standing from nature or experience, it is (in this instance,
at least) unclouded by passion. I wish the same happi-
ness which I wish to myself, to those on one side and on
the

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the other. I would not hurt either in the least degree ; I would not willingly give them any pain.

I have likewise another advantage, that of having no bias, one way or the other. I have no interest depending : I want no man's favour, having no hopes, no fears from any man : and having no particular attachment of any kind, to either of the contending parties.

But am I so weak as to imagine, that because I am not angry at *them*, they will not be angry at *me*? No ; I do not imagine any such thing. Probably *both* will be angry enough : that is, the warm men on both sides, were it only for this, that I am not as warm as themselves. For what is more insufferable to a man in a passion, than to see you keep your temper? And is it not a farther provocation, that I do not behave as he does to his opponent? That I call him no ill names? That I give him no ill words? I expect therefore to be abused on all sides ; and cannot be disappointed, unless by being treated with common humanity.

This premised, I come to the point, to give you my free Thoughts on the present State of Public Affairs, the Causes and Consequences of the present Commotions. But permit me to remind you, that I say nothing peremptorily. I do not take upon me to affirm, that things are thus or thus. I just set down my naked thoughts; and that without any art or colouring.

" What then do you think is the direct and principal cause of the present public commotions, of the amazing ferment among the people, the general discontent of the nation?" Which now rises to an higher degree, than it has done in the memory of man : Insomuch that I have heard it affirmed with my own ears, " King GEORGE ought to be treated as King CHARLES was." Is it the extraordinary bad Character of the King ? I do not apprehend it is. Certainly if he is not, as some think, the best Prince in Europe, he is far from being the *Worst*. One not greatly prejudiced in his favour, does not charge him with want of *Virtue*, (of this he judges him to have *more than enough*) but with wanting those Royal Vices, which (with MACHIAVEL and the

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ingenious Doctor MANDEVILLE) he supposes would be
public Benefits.

"But does he not likewise want *Understanding?*" So it has been boldly affirmed. And it must be acknowledged this charge is supported by facts, which cannot be denied. The first is, He believes the Bible; the second, He fears God; the third, He loves the Queen. Now suppose the first of these, considering the prejudice of education, might consist with some share of understanding, yet how can this be allowed with regard to the second? For although in the times of ignorance and barbarism, men imagined, *the fear of God was the BEGINNING of wisdom*, our enlightened age has discovered, it is the END of it: that whenever the fear of God begins wisdom is at an end. And with regard to the third, for a man to love his wife, unless perhaps for a month or two, must argue such utter want of sense as most men of rank are now ashamed of. But after all, there are some, who, allowing the facts, deny the consequence. Who still believe, and that after the most accurate inquiry, from such as have had the best means of information, that there are few noblemen or gentlemen in the nation, (and we have many not inferior to most in Europe,) who have either so good a natural understanding, or so general a knowledge of all the valuable parts of learning.

"But suppose something might be said for his Majesty's understanding, what can be said in excuse of his *bad actions?* As first, his pardoning a murderer?" I really think something may be said on this head also. Can you or I believe, that the King knew him to be such? Understood him to be a wilful murderer? I am not sure of it at all; neither have you any rational proof: (even supposing this to have been the case, which is far from being clear.) And if he did not know or believe him to be such, how can he be blamed for pardoning him? Not to have pardoned him in this case, would have been inexcusable before God and man.

"But what can be said in excuse of his being governed by his mother, and fixing all his measures at Carlton house?" It may be said, that if it was so, it is past, and so is no matter of present complaint. But who

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who informed you that it was? Any eye and ear-witness? O, it is in every body's mouth." Very well: but every body is nobody: so this proof is no proof at all. And what better proof have you, or any man, of his fixing any of his measures there? This has been affirmed an hundred times; but never was proved yet. " Nay, " but is it not undeniable fact, that he spent hour after hour with her? And especially when he was hard pressed, and knew not which way to turn?" And what then? Who loves him better than his parent? And whom has he a right to love better than her? Who is more faithful to him, more steadily desirous of his welfare? And whom can he trust better? Suppose then it was true, (which is more than any man can prove) that he did consult her on all occasions, and particularly when he was in trouble and perplexity, who can blame him for so doing?

" Well, be this as it may, who can help blaming " him for giving so many *Pensions*?" This is a thing which I do not understand, and can therefore neither praise nor blame. Some indeed, I think, are *well bestowed*, on men eminent in their several professions. All, I believe, are *well designed*, particularly those given to men who are removed from public Employments. Yet, I fear, some of these are *ill bestowed*, on those who not only fly in the face of their benefactor; but avail themselves of his favours to wound the deeper. " For were he not in the wrong, these would never " turn against him!" What pity they should enjoy them another day, after such foul and flagrant ingratitude?

This fault (if it were really such) would argue too great *easiness* of temper. But this is quite the reverse of what is commonly objected, *inflexible stubbornness*. " Nay, what else could occasion the settled disregard " of so many *petitions* and *remonstrances*, signed by so " many thousand hands, and declaring the sense of " the Nation." The *sense of the nation!* Who can imagine this, that knows the manner wherein nine in ten, I might say, ninety-nine in an hundred, of those petitions are procured? A Lord or Squire (sometimes two or more) goes or sends his steward, round the town where his seat is, with a paper, which he tells the

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honest men is for the good of their King and Country. He desires each to set his name or mark to this. And who has the hardiness to gainsay; especially, if my Lord keeps open house? Mean time the Contents of it they know nothing about.

I was not long since at a town in *Kent*, when one of these petitions was carrying about. I asked one and another, "Have you signed the petition?" And found none that had refused it. And yet not one single person to whom I spoke, had either read it, or heard it read.

Now I would ask any man of common Sense, What stress is to be laid on these petitions? And how do they declare the *sense of the nation*? Nay, of the very persons that have signed them? What a shocking insult is it then on the whole kingdom, to palm these petitions upon us, of which the very subscribers have not read three lines, as the general *sense of the nation*?

But suppose they had read all that they have subscribed, what judges are they of these matters? To put this beyond dispute, let us only propose one case out of a thousand. Step back a few years, and suppose Mr PITT at the head of the Administration. Here comes up a petition from *Newcastle upon Tyne*, signed by five hundred hands, begging his Majesty to dismiss that corrupt minister, who was taking such measures, as tended to the utter ruin of the nation. What would Mr PITT say to this? Would he not ask, "How came these colliers and keelmen to be so well acquainted with affairs of state? How long have they been judges of public administration? Of naval and military operations? How came they to understand the propriety or impropriety of the measures I take? Do they comprehend the balance of Europe? Do they know the weakness and strength of its several kingdoms? The characters of the monarchs and their ministers? The springs of this and that public motion? Else, why do they take upon them, to scan my conduct? *Nec sutor ultrà crepidam!* Let them mind their own work, keep to their pits and keels, and leave state-affairs to me."

"But surely you do not place the Citizens of *London* on a level with the colliers of *Newcastle*?" I do not,

And

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And yet I suppose they were equally incompetent judges of the measures which Mr Pitt took. And I doubt they are full as incompetent judges of the measures taken by the present ministry. To form a tolerable judgment of them, requires not only a good understanding, but more time than common tradesmen can spare, and better information than they can possibly procure. I think, therefore, that the encouraging them to pass their verdict on Ministers of state, yea on King, Lords and Commons, is not only putting them out of their way, but doing them more mischief than you are aware of.

" But the *Remonstrance* ! Surely the King ought to have paid more regard to the Remonstrance of the CITY OF LONDON." Consider the case ; the city had presented a Petition, which he could by no means approve of, as he judged it was designed not so much to inform him, as to inflame his subjects. After he had rejected this, as mildly as could be done, whilst he viewed it in this light, they present a Remonstrance to the same effect, and (as he judged) with the same design. What then could he do less than he did ? Could he seem to approve what he did not approve ? If not, how could he testify his full disapprobation in more inoffensive terms ?

As to the idle, shameless tale of his bursting out into laughter at the Magistrates, any who know his Majesty's temper, would as soon believe that he spit in their faces, or struck them a box on the ear.

His Majesty's character then, after all the pains which have been taken to make him odious, as well as contemptible, remains unimpeached; and therefore cannot be in any degree the cause of the present Commotions. His whole conduct, both in public and private, ever since he began his reign, the uniform tenor of his behaviour, the general course both of his Words and Actions, has been worthy of an Englishman, worthy of a Christian, and worthy of a King.

" Are not then the present Commotions owing to his having extraordinary bad Ministers ? Can you say that his ministers are as blameless as himself ? " I do not say this : I do not think so. But I think they are not one jot worse than those that went before them :

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nor than any set of ministers, who have been in place for at least thirty years last past. I think they are not a jot worse than their opponents, than those who bawl the loudest against them, either with regard to intellectual or moral abilities, with regard to sense or honesty. Set twenty against twenty, or ten against ten: and is there a pin to choose?

"However, are not these commotions owing to the "extraordinary bad measures they have taken? Surely "you will not attempt to defend all their measures!" No indeed. I do not defend *General Warrants*. But I observe, 1. The giving these, be it good or bad, is no extraordinary measure. Has it not been done by all ministers for many years, and that with little or no objection? 2. This ordinary measure is of exceeding little importance to the nation in general: so little, that it was never before thought worthy to be put into the list of public grievances: so little, that it never deserved the hundredth part of the outcry which has been made concerning it.

I do not defend the *killing* of Mr ALLEN. But I would have the fact truly represented. By the best information I can gain, I believe it stands just thus. About that time, the mob had been very turbulent. On that day they were likely to be more insolent than ever. It was therefore judged proper to send a party of soldiers, to prevent or repress their violence. Their presence did not prevent it: the mob went so far as to throw stones at the soldiers themselves. One of them hit and wounded a soldier: two or three pursued him: and fired at one whom, being in the same dress, they supposed to be the same man. But it was not: it was Mr ALLEN. Now though this cannot be excused, yet, was it the most horrid villainy that ever was perpetrated? Surely no. Notwithstanding all the tragical exclamations which have been made concerning it, what is this to the killing a man in cool blood? And was this never heard of in England?

I do not defend the measures which have been taken relative to the *Middlesex Election*. But let it be remembered, 1st, That there was full as much violence on the one side as on the other: 2dly, That a right of *Expulsion*

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sion, of putting a member out of the House, manifestly implies a right of *Exclusion*, of keeping him out; otherwise that right amounts to just nothing at all: 3dly, That consequently a member expelled is incapable of being re-elected, at least during that Session; as incapable as one that is disqualified any other way. It follows, 4thly, That the votes given for this disqualified person are null and void, being in effect given for nobody. Therefore, 5thly, If the other Candidate had two hundred votes, he had a majority of two hundred.

Let it be observed farther, if the electors had the liberty of choosing *any qualified person*, it is absolute nonsense to talk of their "being deprived of the liberty of choosing;" because they were not permitted to choose *a person utterly unqualified*.

But suppose a single borough or county were deprived of this in a single instance: (which undoubtedly is the case, whenever a person duly elected does not sit in the house:) How is this "depriving the good people of *England*, the NATION of their BIRTHRIGHT?" What an insult upon common sense is this wild way of talking? If *Middlesex* is wronged (put it so) in this instance, how is *Yorkshire* or *Cumberland* affected by it? or twenty counties and forty boroughs besides? Much less *all the Nation*? "O, but they *may be* affected by "and by." Very true! And the sky may fall!

To see this whole matter in the clearest light, let any one read and consider the speech of Lord Chief Justice MANSFIELD, on a motion made by Lord CHATHAM, "To repeal and rescind the resolutions of the House of Commons, in regard to the expulsion and incapacity of Mr WILKES."

"IN this debate, though it has been already spoken to with great eloquence and perspicuity, I cannot content myself with only giving a single vote; I feel myself under a strong necessity of saying something more, the subject requires it, and though the hour is late [it being then near ten o'clock] I shall demand your indulgence, while I offer my sentiments on this motion.

"I am

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" I am sure, my Lords, many of you must remember, from your reading and experience, several persons expelled the House of Commons, without ever this House once pretending to interfere, or call in question by what authority they did so. I remember several myself [*here his Lordship quoted several cases*] in all which, though most of the candidates were sure to be *re-chosen*, they never once applied, resting contented with the expulsatory power of the House, as the *only self-sufficient, dernier resort* of application.

" It has been echoed on all sides, from the partizans of this motion, that the House of Commons acted illegally, in accepting Col. LUTTREL, who had but 296 votes, in preference to Mr WILKES, who had 1143. But this is a mistake of the grossest nature imaginable, and which nothing but the intemperature of people's zeal could possibly transport them to, as Mr WILKES had been previously considered by the laws as an unqualified person to represent the people in Parliament; therefore it appears very plainly, that Col. LUTTREL had a very great majority, not less than 296, Mr WILKES being considered as *nobody* in the eye of the law; consequently Col. LUTTREL had no *legal* opposition.

" In all contested elections, where one of the parties think themselves not legally treated, I should be glad to know to whom it is they resort? Is it to the Freeholders of the Borough, or the County they would represent? Or is it to the people at large? Who cannot see, at once, the absurdity of such a question? Who so ignorant of our laws, that cannot immediately reply and say, " It is the House of Commons who are the only judges to determine every nicety of the laws of election; and from whom there is no appeal, after they have once given their determination?" All the Freeholder has to do, is to determine on his object, by giving him his vote; the ultimate power lies with the House of Commons, who is to judge of his being a legal object of representation in the several branches of his qualifications. This, my Lords, I believe, is advancing no new doctrine, nor adding an iota to the extension of the privilege of a Member

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" ber of the House of Commons, more than what the
" constitution long ago has given him; yet here is a
" cry made, in a case that directly applies to what I
" have been speaking of, as if it was illegal, arbitrary,
" and unprecedented.

" I do not remember, my Lords, in either the course
" of my reading or observation, ever to have known
" an instance of a person's being re-chosen, after being
" expelled, till the year 1711; then indeed, my me-
" mory serves me with a case of Sir ROBERT WALPOLE.
" He was expelled the House of Commons, and was
" afterwards re-chosen; but this last event did not take
" place till the meeting of the next Parliament; and
" during that interval, I find no debate about the ille-
" gality of his expulsion, no interference of the House
" of Lords, nor any addresses from the public, to de-
" cry that measure by a dissolution of Parliament.

" Indeed, as for a precedent of one House interfer-
" ing with the rules, orders, or business of another, my
" memory does not serve me at present with the recol-
" lection of a single one. As to the case of TITUS
" OATES, as mentioned by the noble Lord in my eye
" (Lord CHATHAM), he is very much mistaken in re-
" gard to the mode; his was a trial in the King's-Bench,
" which, on a writ of error, the House of Commons
" interfered in, and they had an authority for so doing.
" A judge certainly may be mistaken in points of law,
" the wisest and the best of us may be so at times, and
" it reflects no discredit; on the contrary, it does par-
" ticular honour, when he finds himself so mistaken,
" to reverse his own decree; but for one House of Par-
" liament interfering with the business, and reversing
" the resolutions of another, it is not only unprece-
" dented, but unconstitutional to the last degree.

" But suppose, my Lords, that this House coincided
" with this motion; suppose we all agreed *nem. con.* " to
" repeal and rescind the resolutions of the House of
" Commons, in regard to the expulsion and incapaci-
" tation of Mr WILKES;" — Good God! What may
" be the consequence! The people are violent enough
" already, and to have the superior branch of legisla-
" tion join them, would be giving such a public encou-

" ragement

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" rage ment to their proceedings, that I almost tremble,
" while I even suppose such a scene of anarchy and
" confusion."

What then can we think of the violent outcry, "That
" the nation is oppressed, deprived of that liberty which
" their ancestors bought with so much treasure and
" blood, and delivered down through so many genera-
" tions?" Do those who raise this cry believe what
they say? If so, are they not under the highest infatu-
ation? Seeing that *England*, from the time of *WILLIAM*
the Conqueror, yea, of *JULIUS CÆsar*, never enjoyed
such liberty, civil and religious, as it does at this day.
Nor do we know of any other kingdom or state in
Europe, or in the world, which enjoys the like.

I do not defend the measures which have been taken
with regard to *America*, I doubt whether any man can
defend them, either on the foot of law, equity or pru-
dence. But whose measures were these? If I do not
mistake, Mr *GEORGE GRENVILLE*'s. Therefore the
whole merit of these measures belongs to him, and not
to the present ministry.

" But is not the general dissatisfaction owing, if not
" to any of the preceding causes, to the *extraordinary*
" *bad conduct* of the Parliament, particularly the House
" of Commons?" This is set in so clear a light by a
late writer, that I need only transcribe his words.

" THE last recess of Parliament was a period filled
" with unprecedented troubles: and the Session opened
" in the midst of tumults. Ambitious men, with a per-
" severance uncommon in indolent and luxurious times,
" rung all the changes of popular noise for the pur-
" pose of intimidation. The ignorant, who could
" not distinguish between real and artificial clamours,
" were alarmed; the lovers of their own ease wished
" to sacrifice the just dignity of the House of Commons
" to a temporary relief, from the grating sound of se-
" ditious scurrility.

" Hence the friends of the constitution saw the
" opening of the Session with anxiety and apprehension.
" They were afraid of the timidity of others, and
" dreaded nothing more than that panic to which po-

" pular

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" popular assemblies, as well as armies, are sometimes subject. The event has shewn that their fears were groundless : The House supported its decisions against the current of popular prejudice : and, in defending their own judicial rights, secured the most solid part of the liberties of their constituents.

" Their firm adherence to their resolutions was not more dignified, than their concessions in the matter of their own rights was disinterested and generous. The extensive privileges which, in a series of ages, had accumulated to the Members of both Houses, were certainly inconsistent with the impartial distribution of justice. To sacrifice these privileges was not only diametrically opposite to the idea of self-interest, with which some asperse the legislature, but it has also thrown a greater weight into the scale of public freedom than any other act passed since the Revolution ; and it has reflected honour on the present Administration, that a bill, so very favourable to the liberty of the subject, was brought in and carried through by them.

" The arbitrary manner of determining Petitions about Elections, has been a serious complaint and of long continuance. I shall not deny to Mr GRENVILLE the merit of bringing in a bill for remedying this grievance; but its passing as it did is a certain proof that the pretended influence of Administration over a majority of the House is a mere bugbear, held forth for private views by the present opposition.

" During the whole Session, the House of Lords behaved with that dignity and unalterable firmness which became the first assembly in a great nation. Attacked with impudent scurrility, they smiled upon rage, and treated the ravings of a despotic Tribune with contempt. When, with an infamous perversion of his pretended love to freedom, he attempted to extend the control of the Peers to the resolutions of the Representatives of the people, they nobly rejected the golden bait ; and scorned to raise the dignity of their House upon the ruins of the other. They in short, throughout the Session, shewed a spirit that disdained to be braved ; a magnanimity that diminished

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" nished their own personal power for the ease and
" comfort of the inferior subject.

" If the conduct of Parliament is in any instance
" blameable, it is in a lenity that is inconsistent with
" the vulgar idea of political courage. They have been
" attacked with scurrility in the Lower House; in the
" Upper they have been treated with indecency and
" disrespect. Their prudence and love for the public
" peace prevailed over their resentment. They knew
" that legal punishment is in these times the road to
" popularity, and they were unwilling to raise insigni-
" ficant men into a consequence that might disturb the
" state."

So far we have gained. We have removed the *ima-*
ginary causes of the present commotions. It plainly ap-
pears, they are not owing to the *extraordinary badness*,
either of the King, of his Parliament, of his Ministers,
or of the measures which they have taken. To what
then are they owing? What are the *real causes* of this
amazing ferment among the people?

Before I say any thing on this subject, let me re-
mind you once more, That I do not *dictate*: I do not
take upon me to *affirm* any thing, but simply tell you
what I think. I think, the first and principal spring of
the whole motion is *French Gold*. " But why do you
" think so ? " I will tell you as plainly as I can.

A person of a complete uniform character, incum-
bered with no religion, with no regard to virtue or mo-
rality, squanders away all that he has. He applies for
a place, but is disappointed. He is thoroughly exas-
perated, abuses the Ministry, asperses the King's Mo-
ther in the grossest manner, is prosecuted, (not for this,
but other achievements) and retires to *France*. After
some time, he suddenly returns to *London*, sets up for a
Patriot, and vehemently inveighs against evil Counse-
lors, Grievances and Mal-administration. The cry
spreads: more and more espouse his cause, and second
him with all their might. He becomes head of the
party; and not only the vulgar, but the world runs after
him. He drives on with still increasing numbers, car-
rying all before him, inflaming the nation more and
more

more, and making their minds evil-affected, in appearance, towards the Ministers of state, but in reality towards the King. Now can any reasonable man believe, that the *French* are ignorant of all this? Or that they have no hand at all therein, but are mere unconcerned spectators? Do they not understand their own interest better? If they did not kindle the fire, will they not use all means to prevent its going out? Will they not take care to add fuel to the flame? Will they not think forty or fifty thousand Louis-d'ors, well bestowed on so important an occasion?

I cannot but think this is (at least) one principal spring of all the present commotions. But may not other causes likewise concur? As, 1st, *Covetousness*, a love of *English* as well as of *French* gold. Do not many hunger after the lucrative employments which their neighbours enjoy? They had rather have them themselves. And will not those that are hungry naturally cry for food? 2^{dly}, *Ambition*. How many desire honour, perhaps more than they do money itself? And how various are the shapes which they will put on, in order to attain it? 3^{dly}, Those who are not so much under the power of these, are yet susceptible of *Pride* or *Envy*; and frequently of both together. To these we may, 4^{thly}, add *Resentment*. Many doubtless look upon themselves as injured, were it only on this account, that they are not regarded, yea and recompensed as their merits or services deserve. Others are *angry* because they are disappointed; because, after all their schemes, which they imagined could not fail of success, they are not able to carry their point.

Now all these, united by these various motives, some encouraged by good pay in hand, (and perhaps by promises of more) others animated by covetousness, by ambition, by envy, pride and resentment, by every means animate all they have access to. They treat both rich and poor (according to their rank) with all elegance and profuseness. They talk largely and vehemently. They write abundantly, having troops enough in their service. They publish *Addresses*, *Petitions*, *Remonstrances*, directed nominally to the King, (otherwise they would not answer the end); but really to the people. Herein their orators
make

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make use of all the powers of rhetoric. They bring forth their strong reasons, the very best which the cause will bear. They set them off with all the beauty of language, all the poignancy of wit. They spread their writings in pamphlets, news-papers, magazines, &c. to every corner of the land. They are indefatigable in their work : they never stop to take breath ; but as they have tongues and pens at command, when one has done, another begins, and so on and on with a continuance. By this means the flame spreads wider and wider : it runs as fire among the stubble. The madness becomes epidemic, and no medicine hitherto has availed against it. The whole nation fees *the State in danger*, as they did *the Church* sixty years ago : and the world now *wanders after Mr WILKES*, as it did then after Dr SACHEVEREL !

One means of increasing the ferment is, the suffering no contradiction : the whootting at all who labour for peace, and treading them down like dirt : the using them just as they do the King, without either justice or mercy. If any writes on that head, presently the cry is raised, “ O, he only writes for pay.” But if he does, do not those on the other side too ? Which are paid best, I do not know : but doubtless both are paid, a very few old-fashioned mortals excepted, who having nothing to hope, and nothing to fear, simply consider the good of their country.

“ But what do you think the end will be ? ” It is easy to foresee this. Supposing things to take their natural course, they must go from bad to worse.

*In stipulam veluti cum flamma furentibus austris
Incidit, aut rapidus montano flumine torrens
Exiit, oppositasque evicit gurgite moles.*

The people will be inflamed more and more : the torrent will swell higher and higher, till at length it bursts through all opposition, and overflows the land. The consequences of these commotions will be (unless an higher hand interpose) exactly the same as those of the like commotions in the last century. First, The land will become a field of blood : many thousands of poor *Englishmen* will sheath their swords in each others bowels, for the diversion of their good neighbours.

Then

Then either a Commonwealth will ensue, or else a second CROMWELL. One must be: but it cannot be determined which, King W—, or King Mob.

“ But that case is not parallel with this.” It is not, in all particulars. In many respects it is widely different. As, 1st, With regard to the King himself. Few will affirm the character of King CHARLES, (even allowing the account given by Lord CLARENDON to be punctually true in every respect) to be as faultless as that of King GEORGE. But other passions, as well as love, are blind. So that when these are raised to a proper height, especially when JUNIUS has thrown a little more of his magic dust into the eyes of the people, and convinced them, that what are virtues *in others*, are mere vices *in HIM*, the good Patriots will see no manner of difference, between a King GEORGE and King CHARLES — or even a NERO.

The case is also widely different, 2^{dly}, With regard to the *Ministry*. King GEORGE has no such furious drivers about him, as poor King CHARLES had. But a skilful painter may easily add a few features, either to one or the other, and by a little colouring make Lord NORTH the very picture of Lord STRAFFORD, and Archbishop CORNWALLIS of Archbishop LAUD.

How different likewise is the case, 3^{dly}, With regard to the *administration* of public affairs? The requiring tonnage and poundage, the imposing ship-money, the prosecutions in the *Bishops Courts*, in the *High Commission-Court*, and in the *Star-chamber*, were real and intolerable grievances. But what is there in the present administration which bears any resemblance to these? Yet if you will view even such an affair as the *Middlesex Election*, through Mr HORNE’s magnifying glass, it will appear a more enormous instance of oppression than a hundred star-chambers put together.

The parallel does not hold, 4^{thly}, With regard to the *opposers* of the King and his Ministry. Is Mr BURKE the same calm, wise, disinterested man, that Mr HAMPDEN was? And where shall we find twenty Noblemen and twenty Gentlemen (to name no more) in the present opposition, whom any impartial man will set on a level with the same number of those that opposed King CHARLES and his Ministry?

Nor

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Nor does the parallel hold, *5thly*, In this respect. That was in great measure a contest about *Religion*: at least about rites and ceremonies, and opinions, which many supposed to be religion. But all religion is out of the question now: This is generally allowed, both by the one side and the other, to be so very a trifle, that they do not give themselves the least concern about it.

In one circumstance more there is an obvious difference. The Parliament were then the King's Enemies. Now they are his firmest friends. But indeed this difference may easily be removed. Let the King only take Mr WILKES's advice and dissolve the Parliament. The Parliament of 1640, (the first which sat after the troubles began) altho' many therein were much dissatisfied with the measures which had been taken, yet would never have been prevailed upon, to join in the schemes which afterwards prevailed. But when that Parliament was so seasonably dissolved, and a few men, wise in their generation, practising with unwearied industry on the heated spirits of the people, had procured a new Parliament to be chosen after their own heart: Then it was not long ere the train took fire, and the whole constitution was blown up!

But notwithstanding the disparity between the present and past times, in the preceding respects, yet how surprizingly does the parallel hold in various particulars? 1. An handful of people laid a scheme, which few would have believed, had a man then declared it unto them: (Though indeed it is probable, that at the beginning they had no settled scheme at all.) 2. These professed great Zeal for the *good of their country*, were vehement contenders for *liberty*, cried aloud against *evil ministers* and the *evil measures* which they pursued, and were continually declaiming against either real or imaginary *grievances*. 3. They were soon joined by men eminent for *probity* as well as for *understanding*, who undoubtedly were what the others appeared, lovers of their King and Country, and desired nothing but the removal of bad ministers, and the redress of real grievances. 4. The spirits even of these were gradually sharpened and embittered against the King. And they were

were drawn farther and farther by the art of their leaders, till they had gone so far, they knew not how to retreat : yea, till they (passively at least) concurred in those measures, which at first their very souls abhorred.

5. Mean time the nation in general was inflamed with all possible diligence, by *Addresses*, *Petitions*, and *Remonstrances*, admirably well devised for the purpose ; which were the most effectual *Libels* that could be imagined against the King and Government, and were continually spread throughout the land, with all care and assiduity.

6. Among the most inflamed and embittered in all *England* were the People of *London*, as the managers had the best opportunity of practising upon them.

7. All this time they professed the highest regard for the King, for his honour as well as safety ; an authentic monument whereof we have in the SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT. And these professions they continued with equal vehemence till within a short time of the cutting off his head !

Now what man who has the least degree of understanding, may not see in the clearest light, how surprizingly the parallel holds in all these circumstances ?

" But do not you think it is in the power of the King
 " to put an end to all these commotions, by only sending
 " his Mother away, changing his Ministers, and
 " dissolving the Parliament ? " He may send his Mother away : and so he may his Wife, if they please to rank her among his evil counsellors. He may put out his present Ministers, and desire the Lord-Mayor, to put others in their place. He may likewise dissolve the present Parliament (as King CHARLES did that of 1640) and exchange it for one chosen, animated and tutored by Mr WILKES and his friends. But can you really believe this would mend the matter ? Would put an end to all these commotions ? Certainly the sending his Mother to the Indies would avail nothing, unless he removed his Ministers too. Nor would the putting out these, yea every man of them, avail any thing, unless at the same time he put in every man whom Lord CHATHAM chose. But neither would this avail, unless he struck the finishing stroke, by dissolving the Parliament. Then indeed he would be as perfectly safe, as the
 " sheep that had given up their dogs ? "

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It would puzzle the wisest man alive, to tell what the King can do : What can he do, that will still the raging of the sea, or the madness of the people ? Do you imagine, it is in his power to do any thing which will please all parties ? Can he do any thing that will not displease one, as much as it will please the other ? Shall he drive his * Mother out of the land ? Will this then please all parties ? Nay will not some be apt to inquire, " How has she deserved it at his Hands ? " " Why, she is an evil counsellor." How does this appear ? Who are the witnesses of it ? Indeed we have read as grave and formal accounts of the conferences at Carleton-house, as if the relater had stood all the time behind the curtain, and taken down the whole matter in short-hand. But what shadow of proof of all this ? No more than of the conferences related in *Tristram Shandy*.

" But she is a bad Woman." Who ever said or thought so, even while she was in the flower of her age ? From the time that she first set foot in *England*, was there a more faultless character in the nation ? Nay, was not her whole behaviour, as a Wife, as a Mother, as a Mistress, and as a Princess, not only blameless but commendable in the highest degree, till that period of time arrived, when it was judged proper, in order to blacken her (supposed) favourite, to asperse her too ? And then she was *illud quod dicere nolo* ! One would think that even the *ignobile vulgus*, the beasts of the people, the lowest, basest herd, who wore the human form, would be ashamed of either advancing or crediting, so senseless, shameless a tale. Indeed I can hardly think it is credited by one in an hundred even of those who foul their mouths with repeating it. Let it die and be forgotten ! Let it not be remembered, that ever any *Englishman* took so dirty a slander into his mouth.

" However, become what will of his Mother, let him put away his bad Ministers." Suppose they really are bad, do you know where he can find better ? Where can he find twenty men, we will not say of *Christian*, but of *Roman* integrity ? Point them out, men of sound judgment, of clear apprehension, of universal benevolence, lovers of mankind, lovers of their country, lovers of

* This was wrote before the Princess Dowager went abroad.

of their King : Men attached to no party, but simply pursuing the general good of the nation : Not haughty, or overbearing : not addicted to passion ; not of a revengeful temper : superior to covetousness on the one hand, free from profuseness on the other. I say, shew me the men, only this small number ; or rather, shew them to his Majesty. Let clear and satisfactory proof be given, that this is their character. And if these worthy men are not employed in the place of the unworthy ones, you will then have some reason to stretch your throat against evil Ministers.

“ But if the matter were wholly left to him, would “ not Lord ————— immediately employ twenty such ? ” That may bear some doubt. It is not certain, that he would ; perhaps he knows not where to find them. And it is not certain to a demonstration, that he would employ them, if he did. It is not altogether clear, that he is such himself, that he perfectly answers this character. Is he free from pride ? From any thing haughty in his temper, or overbearing in his behaviour ? Is he neither passionate nor revengeful ? Is it indisputably plain, that he is equally clear of covetousness on the one hand, and profuseness on the other ? Is he steady and uniform in his conduct : always one thing ? Is he attached to no party, but determined at all events singly to pursue the general good of the nation ? Is he a *lover of the King* ? Is he *remarkably grateful* to him, from whom he has received no common favours ? If not, though he has a strong understanding, and a large share of manly eloquence, still it may be doubted, whether he and his friends would behave a jot better than the Ministers we have already.

And suppose the King were to dissolve the Parliament, what hope is there of having a better, even though the nation were as quiet and peaceable as it was ten years ago ? Are not the present members, generally speaking, men of the greatest property in the land ? And are they not, the greater part of them at least, as honest and wise as their neighbours ? How then should we mend ourselves at any time ; but especially at such a time as this ? If a new Parliament were chose during this epidemic madness, what probability of a better than the present ?

Have

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24 FREE THOUGHTS, &c.

Have we not all the reason in the world to apprehend it would be a much worse? That it would be the Parliament of 1641, instead of the Parliament of 1640? Why, this is the very thing we want, the very point we are aiming at. Then would JUNIUS and his friends quickly say, "Sir King, know your place!" *Es et ipse lignum.* "Take your choice! Be King log, or to the "block!"

Does it not then appear, upon the whole, that it is by no means in the power of the King, by any step which he can possibly take, to put a stop to the present commotions. That especially he cannot make concessions without making a bad matter worse? That the way he has taken, the standing his ground, was as wise a method as he could take, and as likely to restore the peace of the nation, as any the wit of man could devise? If any is more likely, would it not be, vigorously to execute the laws against incendaries? Against those, who by spreading all manner of lies, inflame the people even to madness: To teach them, that there is a difference between *liberty*, which is the glory of *Englishmen*, and *licentiousness*, a wanton abuse of liberty, in contempt of all laws, divine and human? Ought they not to feel, if they will not see, that *scandalum regis*, scandalizing the King, is as punishable as *scandalum magnatum*? That for the future, none may dare to slander the King, any more than one of his nobles: much less to print and spread that deadly poison among his Majesty's liege subjects. Is not this little less than high treason? Is it not sowing the seeds of rebellion?

It is possible, this might restore peace; but one cannot affirm, it would. Perhaps GOD has a controversy with the land, for the general neglect, nay contempt of all religion. Perhaps he hath said, *Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?* And if this be the case, what can avail, unless his anger be turned away from us? Was there ever a time, in which there was a louder call for them that fear GOD to humble themselves before him? If haply general humiliation and repentance, may prevent general destruction!

F I N I S.